



Activity 2: Wisconsin Travel Then and Now

Objectives

- ◆ To recognize the importance of river travel in the past.
- ◆ To compare and contrast river and highway travel in Wisconsin.
- ◆ To practice map skills.

Overview

Throughout history, people have sought the most efficient and inexpensive means to travel and move goods from one place to another. Although water transportation today remains significant for shipping and recreation, most of our everyday travel is land based. To highlight changes in transportation in Wisconsin, students will compare historic river travel and contemporary highway travel in this activity.

Skills and Strategies

Map skills, analysis, comparison, critical thinking, cooperative learning

Materials

- ◆ Wisconsin Rivers map (*one transparency; one copy of map per pair of students*)
- ◆ Wisconsin Travel: Then and Now activity sheet (*one for each student*)
- ◆ Wisconsin Highways Map (*one transparency; one copy of map per pair of students*)
- ◆ Standard Wisconsin highways map for small groups of students (*optional*)
- ◆ String (*optional*)
- ◆ Notes from *A Canoe Voyage up the Minnaw Sotor*
- ◆ Answer Key: Wisconsin River Portage

Procedures

1. Begin the activity by reviewing the basic map skills that will be needed to complete the activity, including the parts of a map (compass rose, scale, key) and cardinal directions (N, S, E, W, SW, NE, etc.).
2. Have students work in pairs for this activity. Hand out the Wisconsin Rivers map to each pair of students and display it as a transparency. Review and discuss the features of the map.
3. Discuss early river travel as described in chapter 2. Ask why river travel was important to early Wisconsin people, and why people didn't travel on highways like we do now. Explain that historically, Wisconsin people used the rivers and waterways to travel and that they traveled from one river to another by short overland trails called portages. Have students identify the portages on the rivers map.

4. Tell students to imagine they are early French fur traders in Wisconsin. They are at the trading post in Green Bay (have each pair find Green Bay on the map) and need to travel to the trading post in Prairie du Chien (have students find this town on the map) for a rendezvous. Remind students that they would have gone by water *all the way* from the Atlantic to Green Bay.
5. Give students time to discuss the travel routes with their partners. Then hand out the Wisconsin Travel: Then and Now activity sheet. Have students work in pairs to complete the river route on the activity sheet. Guide students as they give directions for travel, making sure they include the rivers they take, the direction they are traveling (north, south, southeast, etc.), and any portages.
6. Repeat the mapping activity using the Wisconsin Highways map. Hand out the Wisconsin Highways map and display the transparency.
7. Have students identify the cities of Green Bay and Prairie du Chien. Instead of traveling via waterways, modern travelers will travel by the roads and highways.
8. Have students trace the new route between the two cities and complete the second portion of the activity sheet. Guide students as they give directions for travel. Be sure they include the highways they will be taking and the direction of travel. NOTE: As an optional activity, have students calculate the *approximate* distance traveled, using string and a map scale.

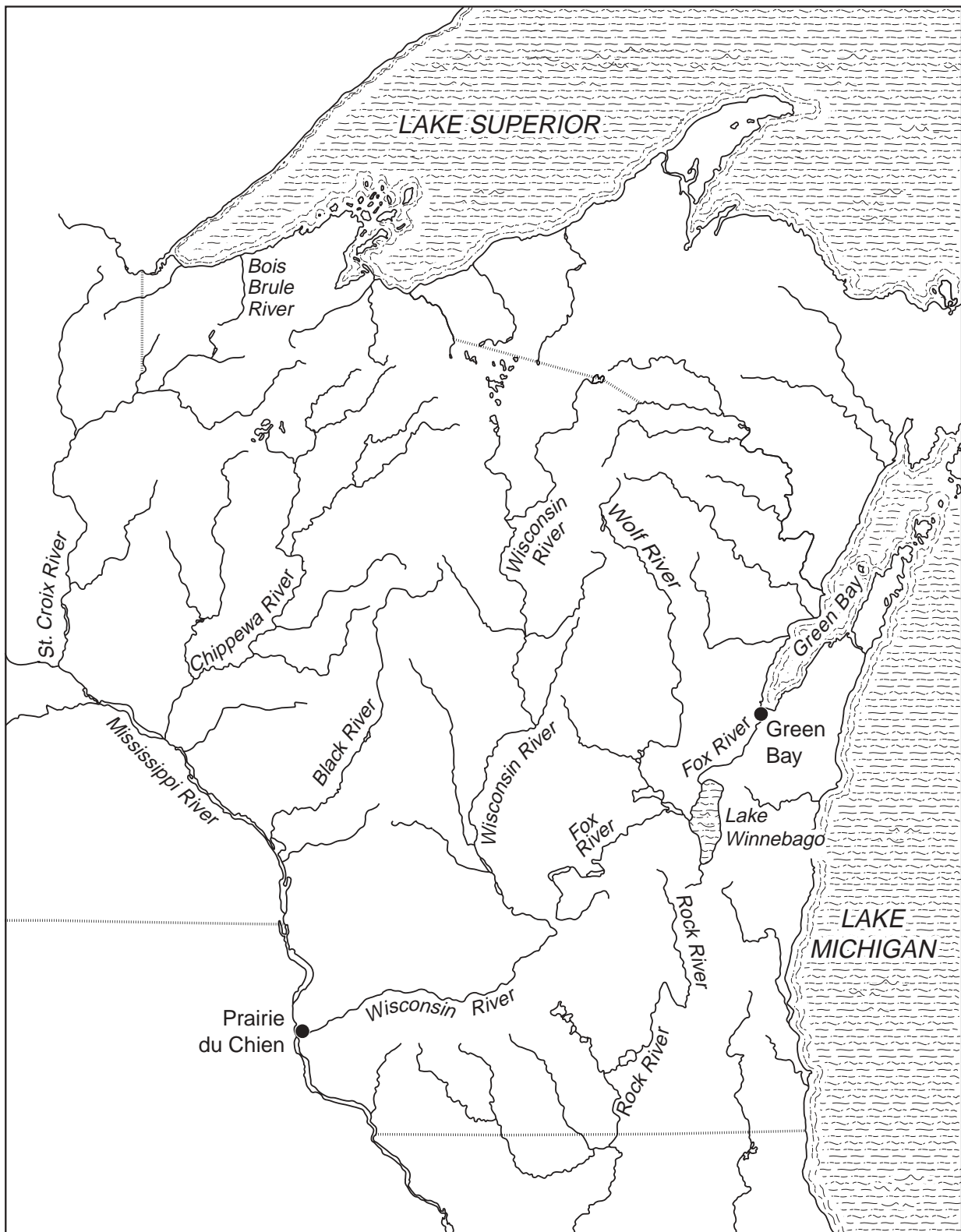
Closure/Assessment

Compare and contrast the two routes and discuss as a class. Have students complete the third portion of the activity sheet with their partners to hand in for assessment. Stress that although land travel is fast today, it was very difficult and time-consuming in the past. In order to move heavy goods and furs, traders had to use water routes.

Extensions

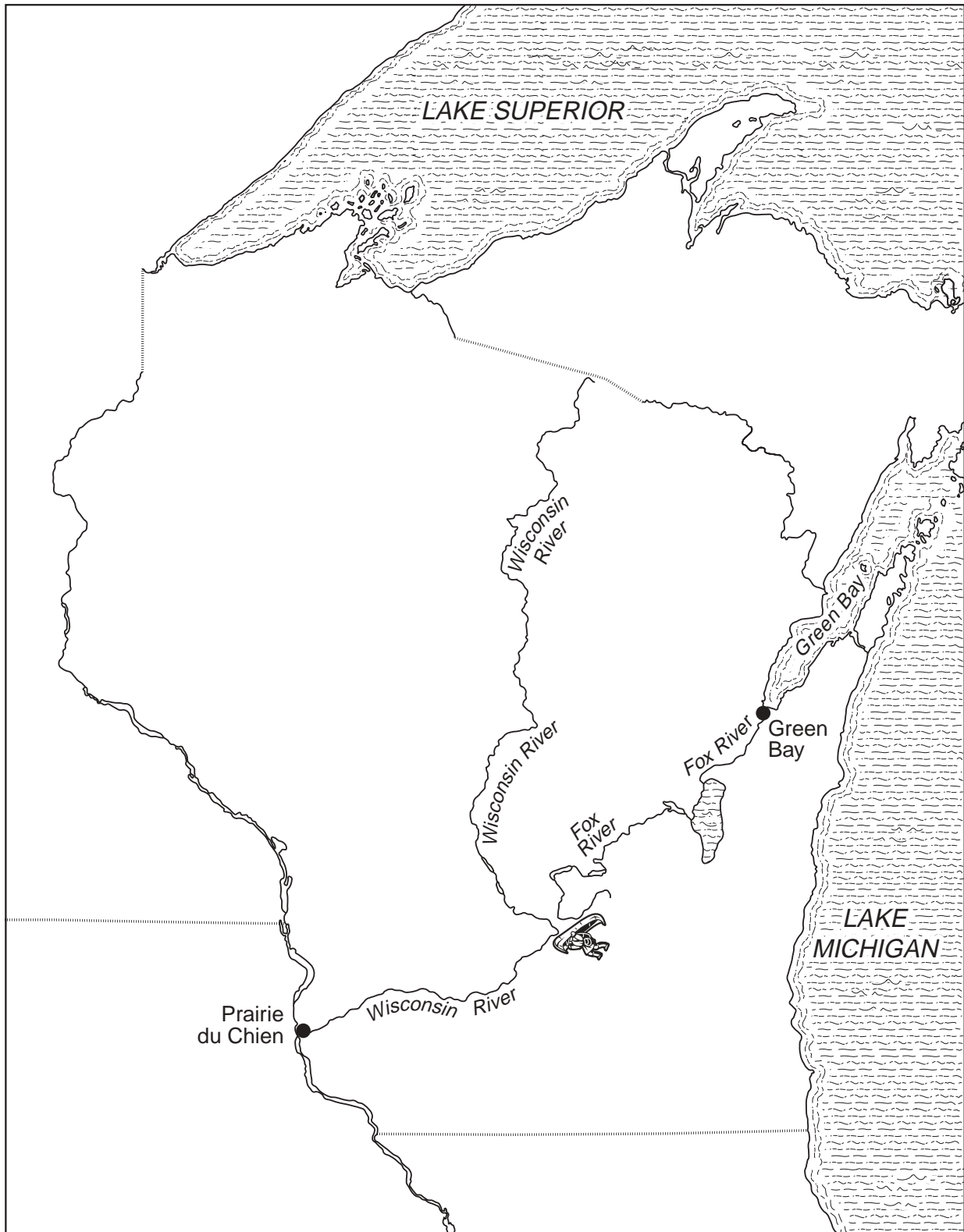
1. Have students compare the speed of river travel versus road travel, assuming a canoe travels about 5 miles per hour, and a car travels about 60 miles per hour. What does this tell us about travel then and now?
2. Interested students can find out how to get from their hometown to Prairie du Chien and to Green Bay. Have them plan their route on a highways map, finding information on the Internet about the cities through which they pass. They can then compile a list of helpful Web sites and turn it in with their marked maps.
3. Have students read about early river travel in Wisconsin from a real primary source: an edited portion of *A Canoe Voyage up the Minnaw Sator* by George William Featherstonhaugh, 1835, (journals published in 1847), included here. Note: there are vocabulary words that will be challenging, even for the best readers. The complete text can be found at <http://www.library.wisc.edu/etext/WIReader/Contents/Voyage.html>
4. Use some of the fantastic lessons from the United States Geological Society to teach more about maps and map skills. Visit their Web site for educators, <http://www.usgs.gov/education.html>, or their main Web site, www.usgs.org. You can also call and order teacher materials at 1-888-ASK-USGS.

Wisconsin Rivers Map



Map by: Amelia Janes/Mike Gallagher, Midwest Educational Graphics

Answer Key: Wisconsin River Portage



Map by: Amelia Janes/Mike Gallagher, Midwest Educational Graphics

Name _____ Date _____

Wisconsin Travel: Then and Now

Then: Wisconsin Rivers

What river route will you take from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien? Give directions for travel and trace the route on your map. Name the waterways that will help you reach Prairie du Chien, and circle the places that you have to portage your canoe.

Now: Wisconsin Highways

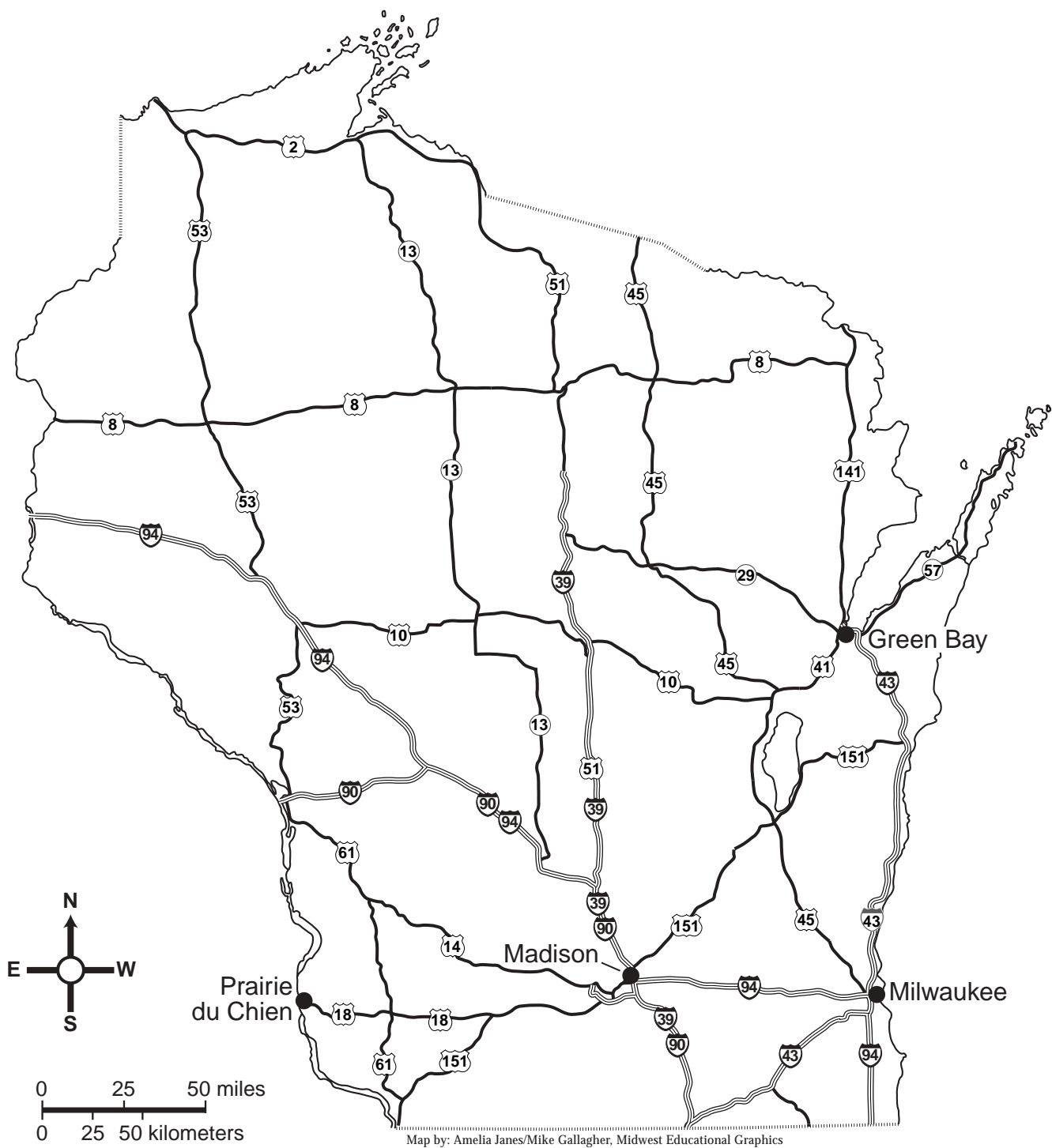
What route will you take from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien? Give directions for travel and trace the route on your map. Name the highways over which you need to travel, and name some of the main cities that you will drive through to reach Prairie du Chien.

Then and Now

In what ways are the river route and highway route the same?

In what ways are the river route and highway route different?

Wisconsin Highways Map



Map by: Amelia Janes/Mike Gallagher, Midwest Educational Graphics

Notes from *A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotor*

by George William Featherstonhaugh (Fan shaw), written in 1835

The following passages are from Chapter 19. We begin at the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers near Ft. Winnebago:

Turning my back upon the waters that flow into the Atlantic, I crossed the portage, and advanced to those that empty themselves into the Gulf of Mexico. The portage was a dead flat of black mud and sand, measuring exactly 2650 paces: it took me exactly twenty-eight minutes to walk across it. The canoe and luggage were conveyed to the shore of the Wisconsin in an ox-cart, and launched upon the river as soon as we reached it. It was a powerful black-looking stream . . . with broad sand-beaches. . . . After struggling so many days as we had against the current of Fox River . . . it was exceedingly gratifying to find ourselves, on one of the most lovely mornings imaginable, carried down stream by a strong current. . . .

At 4 P.M. we passed a picturesque-looking mass of horizontal sandstone, extending with some interruptions for about a mile, distant probably about forty miles from the *portage*; and at half-past five, observing a comfortable place, near to an ancient abandoned Indian village, I made, to the great joy of the men, the signal for landing. . . .

My rest was a good deal disturbed by the mosquitoes, who had taken possession of the tent; and although I was up early, we could not start for a dense fog that was upon the river. I therefore amused myself looking at the deserted wigwams near us. They were formed with nine poles, about twelve feet high, fixed into the ground in a circle, about two feet apart from each other, and their tops bent to a point and fastened together. These poles were strengthened with others interwoven round them, and the whole covered with birch bark. An Indian house of this kind . . . and with a small fire in the middle, is comfortable in the coldest weather, the smoke escaping through a hole where the poles meet. The fog began to clear away at 7 A.M., and we resumed our voyage . . .

Soon we passed a fine stream coming in from the right bank. The country here was remarkably beautiful, the slopes of the banks gracefully wooded. . . . For a distance of about three miles the escarpments were about 250 feet [in] height, the rock every now and then jutting out. . . . I observed, too, that . . . the sandstone had been favourable to Indian talent, the figures of deer, men, and horses—sometimes well executed—being cut into it, and sometimes painted with a red bole. The swallows had availed themselves of the softness of the rock by picking holes in it, and building their nests there in innumerable quantities. . . .

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Having made a hearty breakfast we got afloat again, and about 1 P.M. observed a small prairie on the right bank with some Indian mounds. . . . About 2 P.M. the river began to widen, and we were rapidly approaching the point of its confluence with the Mississippi. I could already perceive the lofty right bank of that famous stream at the end of the vista. . . . At half-past 3 P.M. we bade adieu to the charming Wisconsin, and to the enjoyment of floating upon a favourable current, having entered upon the broad surface of the Mississippi . . . and all our force was wanted to contend against the force of the descending stream. . . . We soon came in sight of Prairie du Chien, an extensive level bottom or prairie, closed in to the east by a strong rocky bluff, which was no doubt once the bank of the river. A new scene now presented itself; there was a respectable-looking military post, cattle grazing, a village, and evidences of a settled population, to which I had been for some time a stranger.

